Livestock Marketing

Livestock are bought and sold in the study area in three contexts: (a) registered government markets, (b) unregistered markets and (c) direct sales between buyers and sellers. All livestock sales are supposed to be taxed, which is the basis for distinguishing between the three marketing contexts above. At the registered government market, taxes are assessed and collected by the market clerk. At the unregistered market this role is performed by a villager who has successfully bid for the privilege of serving as a taxing agent. The purpose of the unregistered market is to gather in as many livestock sales as possible which occur outside the registered market. Inevitably, however, many more sales occur directly between buyer and seller and no taxes are assessed.

When transactions occur in a government market or an unregistered market the buyer receives a certificate called a jamuan guaranteeing him to be the rightful owner. Without this certificate it is possible for someone to bring charges that the livestock are stolen. This guarantee is not so important if the transaction occurs between residents of the same village, but its importance grows when livestock are bought and sold between nomads and farmers, between members of different tribes, or between the residents of distant villages.

The sale of livestock bears a close connection with the change of the seasons, the availability of pasture and water, and the requirements of the farming system. The arrival of nomadic pastoralists with large herds of animals during the rainy season has a profound effect. The relations between nomad and farmer, which often conflict over access to forage and water, are quite complimentary in livestock marketing. In the pages which follow data from a 20% sample of livestock sales at Abu Haraz market are analyzed to illustrate this point.

Figure 2, which shows the monthly total number of transactions of all livestock sales at Abu Haraz, presents a very clear picture of the influence of the rainy season migration of nomads into the area. August and September are the most active months for sales with more than six hundred transactions recorded during September for each year. This amounts to a nearly four-fold increase in volume when compared with the sales in July, the onset of the rainy season.

Nomads arrive in the Abu Haraz area during August and September having migrated from the wetter lands to the south. The reasons for this migration are complex. In part, the nomads are following a strategy of abandoning their winter pastures to avoid overgrazing this resource. Another reason which is given is that the nomads want to escape the flies and mosquitoes.

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89 At Abu Haraz, the total amount of taxes assessed per head on each kind of livestock is as follows: cattle - 0.910; sheep - 0.370; goat - 0.270; donkey - 0.560; camel - 1.200; and horse - 0.850.

90 The time horizon represented in these data is March 1980 to January 1982. Data for October 1981 are missing in Figures 3 through 5.